
.....connections.....

Number 4

Newsletter of the Regina Insight Meditation Community

Spring/Summer/Fall/Winter, 2002-2003

Connect—ed

I am sorry I have taken so long to assemble this issue of “.....connections.....”. I will do my best to ensure future newsletters come out on time.

Many of you not only responded generously to my invitation in our last newsletter to make a donation to help us cover our printing and mailing costs, but also took the trouble to write a few lines about the importance the newsletter is to you as you try to maintain your practice in relative isolation. Thank you very much for taking these actions. They help not only to deepen awareness of the value of communicating in this way, but also to ensure we have adequate funds to have the newsletters properly printed, stapled and delivered. In addition, they give me great incentive to continue putting together our newsletter.

I am still experiencing considerable difficulty in acquiring contributions, especially ones that are submitted before the

deadlines. Consequently, I again urge you to send me (cgilboy@sem.gov.sk.ca or RIMC mailing address) a paragraph or two relating to the theme of the newsletter, or a newsy item of likely interest to others in our community. If you are willing to share original photographs and drawings that express some facet of the dharma, “.....connections.....” would become more visually appealing. I am keen to start a section called *The Sangha Speaks* that contains brief items that might be of general interest to us. The theme for the Spring/Summer 2003 issue is “wisdom” and for the Fall/Winter 2003-04 issue is “retreat.” The respective deadlines are 15th March, 2003, and 15th September, 2003.

May you each benefit in some way from reading the words that follow.

Chris Gilboy

Reflections on Impermanence

Two thousand six hundred years ago while Siddartha Gotama, the prince who would become the Buddha, was living in his palace, he began reflecting on an important question: “Why should I, who am subject to old age, disease and death, seek that which is also subject to old age, disease and death?” Even though his father, the king, protected him from all unpleasant or painful circumstances, he began waking up to the fact that every experience that occurred and every experience he craved for were subject to impermanence. He wanted to know if this was all there was to life. Was there any other purpose to living but to experience the myriad changes and then to die? If this was all there was to life, then was anything at all worth cultivating? This was the question that motivated Siddartha to leave the palace and to seek a way of being that was not trapped by craving and

lust for more experience.

What are we doing here? In the dominantly corporate culture in which we North Americans live, the principles of accumulation, profit and greed dictate prevailing values. Yet, do we ask what motivates this desire for more? I read about a small business in California that will organize any fantasy that you can think of and pay for – adventure trips to exotic places, unusual parties, a trip to the moon, perhaps. But ultimately, what is the point? Where do these experiences go? There is nothing that we can hold on to or take with us when we die. Everything goes back to where it came from – to that great creative and mysterious void.

Our human predicament is that we live in an unstable world, a world that has no substantiality. There is nothing solid to hold on to. The Buddha pointed out that our inner restlessness comes about because we are trying to find permanent refuge in things that are always changing. We are looking for a place to rest in things that are insubstantial in their nature – that are constantly falling apart, coming together and falling apart once more. And that includes our own mind and body. What will provide a secure place for us to rest our weary selves?

There is an inspiring story from the time of the Buddha about a woman named Khema. She was one of the two women responsible for running the first community of nuns and was considered to possess the greatest insight. She came from a ruling family and was very beautiful. Her skin was said to be the colour of pure gold. Because of her beauty and wit, she became the chief consort of King Bimbisara, and was considered his favourite lover from among his many wives, other lovers, female servants and slaves. Because of her high status, and especially on account of her beauty, she was very conceited.

When the Buddha visited the royal court, he spoke against beauty and pleasure, and Khema decided she had no interest in

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hearing him preach. But when the court poets composed songs on the loveliness of the hermitage where the Buddha was staying, she was curious to see it and arranged a visit.

Indeed, the woods and gardens were exquisite. When Khema was led before the Buddha, he made an image appear before her of a goddess far more beautiful than she, and showed that goddess passing from youth, through middle age, to old age when she had broken teeth, grey hair and wrinkled skin. “Will it not be same for me?” Khema thought. The vision deeply impressed on her the truth of impermanence. Then the Buddha, who knew her thoughts, said that people devoted to physical beauty were bound to the world, while those who saw through this attachment were free. When he had finished speaking, Khema was enlightened (as happened in these stories). She left King Bimbisara and became a nun.

The Buddha said, “All that is subject to arising is subject to ceasing.” When this is reflected upon and seen into deeply, we

stop holding on to things. Ultimately, we stop reaching out to things that are not going to bring us the satisfaction that we are truly looking for – satisfaction that can only be found in letting go. We are asked to turn our attention inward and investigate this truth for ourselves. As understanding deepens, we can learn to relax our grasping and rest back into a place of ease and equanimity. This “place”, which is not truly a place, but more a vital aliveness that is the source of all manifestation, resides within our own consciousness. This is our true refuge where we experience utter simplicity and effortlessness. Coming into contact with this simplicity of life, the Buddha said is “our greatest gain.”

Sbarda Rogell

Story of Khema from *The First Buddhist Women: Translations and Commentaries on the Therīgāthā* by Susan Murcott.

From Dana

In this edition of “.....connections.....”, I want to share with you some of my thoughts about the gifts of sitting for longer periods of time – gifts that may not be very apparent if you have not experienced a longer retreat. For some of you, the idea of sitting for a longer period of time might seem daunting. Just getting through a weekend can sometimes be an arduous task, and it’s hard to imagine experiencing that difficulty for a longer time. The truth is that the first few days of retreat are always the most challenging, whether the retreat is two days long or three months. Once one settles into the flow of the retreat, deep practice can begin.

In March, I returned from a month-long retreat at Spirit Rock Meditation Center north of San Francisco. Jill Forrester, a friend and sangha member from Regina also attended with me. The first few days, while making the transition between everyday life and intensive meditation practice, are difficult because the hindrances, particularly restlessness and sleepiness are so prevalent. In a shorter retreat, there is little opportunity to actually experience the fruits of continuity of practice because it takes a few days for my mind to become a little more gathered and concentrated. As concentration strengthens, the hindrances impose themselves less on my experience. A natural settling in occurs, strongly supporting and nourishing my practice. As the days go on, difficult patterns of mind may arise but, because I have cultivated more stillness of mind, I have much more capacity to be able to be with those difficult patterns.

With retreats of two weeks, a month or longer, after the first three or four days of settling in, one enters the middle phase of the retreat. This phase generally is not impinged on by the past or the future; it is where the practice becomes our life, just what we are doing, moment-to-moment. This is when I naturally relax into the flow of the retreat. The experience of settling in happens when I come to sit on my cushion in the hall and I have a feeling of returning home. Even if what I’m experiencing in the moment is challenging and I may have some resistance to it, I also sense that there is nowhere else to be.

In the early days of the retreat this year, I was really inspired by the commitment of the other eighty retreatants, and I noticed how that commitment helped hold me in my practice. We all

seemed to drop deeply into our practice within hours of beginning. I find that being with a community of people who love the dharma as I do always touches my heart. When I sit at established retreat centres, I feel my connection with the larger Vipassana community.

Two aspects which stand out as particularly powerful in a longer period of retreat are simplicity and silence. Life becomes simple with very little actual activity other than following the schedule, which allows me to just settle into the day to have very little to decide upon. Almost everything is already decided. This simplicity supports my awareness practice so that I can be truly present for what is happening in the moment. Instead of rushing about trying to fit more into the day than is possible, I find I have all the time in the world to enjoy sitting, drinking tea or eating an orange. There is really nowhere else to be! At this retreat, I found I loved sitting by the stream near to the dining hall and eating my lunch each day. Being present to the food I was eating and to all of nature that surrounded me brought me much delight.

In longer sitting times, I also become more aware of my natural rhythms. Knowing that this happens, I find ways of adapting the retreat schedule to support my own particular flow. Often I find sittings in the early morning in the hall with very few others present are times of great stillness and ease. Some retreatants sit late into the night, still having energy for practice.

The blessings of silence are ever more evident as the days turn into weeks. Within the silence, I become increasingly aware of the subtleties of my inner and outer experience. Silence creates the spaciousness within which I am aware of the unfolding momentary experience. The outer silence deeply supports inner silence. I find that my love and appreciation of silence are strongest at these times and I recognize both the profundity and the healing which occur when I’m in a silent environment.

Nature often becomes a very powerful support to practice. The ability just to hear the birds, or to feel the bark of the tree or the warmth of the sun, brings me great delight, and the inevitable change and death in nature touch my heart. On a longer retreat, I directly experience the ever-changing cycles of nature, showing me so silently and beautifully the truth of the dharma. Last

February, the earth worms that I so carefully tried to step around each rainy day were a strong reminder of the inevitability of death, no matter how much I tried to protect them. At the same time, when I visited the woods, I delighted each day in the new green shoots emerging from the forest floor.

Being on retreat for weeks gives me a very rich opportunity to see more deeply into the impermanence of my inner experience. With continuity of practice, I see clearly all the different mind states and emotions which arise and pass in my experience. In just one morning, I can begin the day by feeling sleepy and irritable. This might be followed by my developing a sense of peace and ease in my sitting. Then I might find myself irritated because the yoghurt has gone by the time I get to breakfast. Later, I perhaps delight in the protective feeling I experience towards slugs as I take my morning walk through the woods. Because I have the gift of time and space to really be with my body/mind process, I am able to notice all that moves me in my day. Each time I see the impermanence of my momentary experience, this aspect of my understanding is strengthened.

Within the silence and the spaciousness, I can clearly see the judging and comparing mind. I find this invaluable toward discovering just how much these two patterns of mind are present and how they influence my relationship to myself and others. As I notice this, I have the opportunity to work with my mind and to see judgements as just thoughts, not the truth of things. As I do this, my belief in the judging mind weakens.

Each evening during the February retreat, one of the six teachers gave a dharma talk. Hearing so many dharma themes within an ideal practice environment allows my understanding of how these teachings fit together to grow. There is so much opportunity on longer retreats to deeply investigate aspects of the teachings which call my attention.

At longer retreats, there generally are no group interview meetings. Instead, we retreatants have two teachers whom we

see alternately three times each week for 10 to 15 minutes. These occasions provide us with ideal opportunities to receive guidance in working with our own particular process. I have found that having just three interviews a week has greatly increased my confidence in my own practice. Being on a longer retreat gives me the opportunity to see my process, to stay with the difficulties that inevitably arise, and to ride them out. Confidence in my practice grows from my willingness to be on my own with whatever is happening and trusting in the natural wisdom that lies within me.

It has now been months since the retreat ended. Although I feel February receding into the distance, I am very aware of how insights and new understandings which arose then impact my life now. For example, one of the teachers in February pointed out that the best we can do as perfectionists is to break even. Up until then, I had not seen the truth of this. During the retreat, over and over again, I saw how I evaluated my experience and my life through the eyes of perfection. Now, when I find myself getting caught in evaluating what I'm doing as being not good enough, I remember that "breaking even" is "as good as it gets." For me, it's a great relief to begin untangling myself from the tyranny of perfection. I feel that my sitting for that month is having a profound impact on my life. Often, after shorter retreats, I am swept into the current of life and lose some connection with whatever wisdom may have arisen. In longer retreats, the length of time and the depth of silence help insights to settle more deeply into the core of my being.

To convey in words the preciousness of the opportunity for extended periods of practice is a challenge. Words cannot even begin to fully express the nature of the process. I hope that what I've offered here sheds some light on longer retreat experience. May it inspire you to want to engage in silent retreats.

Dana White

The Practice of *Dana*

Chief among the many things that have drawn me to the practice of insight meditation has been the wisdom of the teachings forming the foundation of the practice. The teaching that all beings wish to be happy and that their actions, skilful or unskilful, are targeted to the achievement of this goal is one that has touched me deeply. This profound truth has set me upon a path that seeks skilful and beneficial ways to find happiness for all others and myself so that we may be free of suffering. One of the most beneficial actions that can advance us on that path is generosity.

"*Dana*," the practice of generosity, informs meditation practice and creates space for this practice to flourish. The benefits of generosity are powerful. As Sharon Salzberg says in her book (page 153), *Lovingkindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness*

"The path begins here, and the Buddha began his teachings here, because when we practice generosity, we begin to know a very beautiful quality of joy, a sheer, unhindered delight flowing freely."

When we give, metta (lovingkindness) is present, and we feel compassion, we experience sympathetic joy, and equanimity is manifest in our act. We also abandon and let go of desire, ill will,

aversion and delusion. Giving is a beautiful expression of our goodness and of our oneness with the world.

It is in the spirit of generosity that the teachings are offered with no expectation of anything in return but a wish – an intention – that all beings benefit from them. There are those who dedicate themselves to living in ways that embody the teachings. People like Dana White, Sharda Rogell, Joanne Broatch, Myoshin Kelley, and Rodney Smith have brought their commitment and love of the dharma directly to our community and shared their wisdom with us. Others, like the Dalai Lama, embody the power and wisdom of the dharma and portray them to the world. The generosity of these persons in offering their lives for the benefit of all beings awes and inspires me. It gives me hope for us all. They trust in the dharma and have made this choice knowing that their ability to continue to live in this way depends entirely on the willingness of others to support them in offering the teachings. This takes more courage than I have now, for I, like most of us, cannot fathom living without a regular income, health benefits, a pension and guaranteed vacation time. To live with that much love, certainty and trust in the dharma is a beautiful thing.

..... continued on page 6

VIPASSANA EVENTS: THE SASKATCHEWAN SCENE, 2002

- October 29 to December 3** *"Introduction to Insight Meditation,"* a Six-Week Course with **Dana White** at 2672 Robinson Street, Regina; \$25.00 class fee; contact Maureen McKenzie, (306) 352-1750
- November 14** Meditation Evening, **Sharda Rogell**, at 2672 Robinson Street, Regina (7:30 to 9:30 p.m.)
- November 16 and 17** *"Wise View: Understanding Connection and Disconnection,"* a Non-Residential Retreat with **Sharda Rogell** at Sherwood Forest Country Club, Regina; \$85.00 retreat fee contact Maureen McKenzie, (306) 352-1750
- December 1** Day of Mindfulness with **Dana White** at Seniors' Education Centre, Regina; \$10.00 registration fee for anyone not on the six-week course

THE SASKATCHEWAN SCENE, 2003

- February 8 and 9** Insight Meditation Weekend with **Sharda Rogell** at Sherwood Forest Country Club, Regina; \$85.00 registration fee
- Date to be announced** Meditation Evening, **Joanne Broatch**, at 2672 Robinson Street, Regina (7:30 to 9:30 p.m.)
- March 21 to 23** Non-Residential Retreat with **Joanne Broatch** at Sherwood Forest Country Club, Regina; \$75:00 retreat fee
- March 24 to May 5** *"Introduction to Insight Meditation,"* a Six-Week Course with **Dana White** at 2672 Robinson Street, Regina; \$25.00 class fee
- April 27** Day of Mindfulness with **Dana White** at Seniors' Education Centre, Regina; \$10.00 registration fee for anyone not on the six-week course
- May 24 to 31** Residential Retreat with **Sharda Rogell** at Wood Acres Retreat Centre, Moose Jaw; retreat fee to be announced
- September 13 and 14** Insight Meditation Weekend with **Sharda Rogell** at Sherwood Forest Country Club, Regina; \$85:00 registration fee
- Date to be announced (Fall)** *"Introduction to Insight Meditation,"* a Six-Week Course with **Dana White** at 2672 Robinson Street, Regina; \$25.00 class fee
- November 7 to 11** Residential Retreat with **Howie Cohn** at Wood Acres Retreat Centre, Moose Jaw; retreat fee to be announced.

About Our Teachers



Sharda Rogell is the guiding teacher for the Regina Insight Meditation Community. She started practising in the Theravadin Buddhist tradition in 1979 and teaching worldwide in 1985. She brings a strong emphasis to awakening heartfulness. Sharda has also been influenced by the non-dual teachings of Advaita, as well as Dzogchen in the Tibetan tradition. She presently teaches at the Insight Meditation Society in Massachusetts, and Spirit Rock Meditation Center in California.



Joanne Broatch has been practising Vipassana in the Theravadin tradition since 1980, and teaching since 1994. Her primary guide as a practitioner and as a teacher is Jack Kornfield and she has practised extensively with senior teachers at I.M.S. and Spirit Rock. She is influenced by Diamond Heart work, the Painting Experience, and her own years as a teacher, business consultant, writer and editor. She teaches retreats in Canada and the U.S. and has classes and sitting groups in Vancouver.



Howard Cohn has practiced meditation since 1972. He has lead Vipassana retreats since 1985 and leads ongoing classes in San Francisco and Sausalito. He has studied with many Asian and western teachers of several traditions, including Theravada, Zen, Dzogchen and Advaita Vedanta. He has been strongly influenced by contact with the Indian master H.W.L. Poonja. He has done post graduate work in East/West Psychology and has a private counseling practice.



Dana White has been practising insight meditation since 1988, attending retreats in Canada, United States, England and India. In 2000, she began teacher training under the guidance of Sharda Rogell. For the past nine years, Dana has been the guiding member of the Regina Insight Meditation Community.

Retreats: require pre-registration. If you are on our regular mailing list (please contact us if you wish to be placed on it), details of residential retreats will be mailed two to three months before the event. *Please ask about retreat scholarships* if your financial situation deters you from attending.

Meditation Evenings and Public Talks: Please look for posters at traditional locations announcing public talks by visiting teachers when they are in Regina or Saskatoon.

Introductory Meditation Courses: made up of six classes that generally run from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. and a day of mindfulness; require pre-registration; dates may change – please contact us for up-to-date information.

Weekly Sitting Groups: Regina Wednesdays throughout the year, 7:30 to 9:00 p.m.; 2672 Robinson Street; Dana White will lead whenever possible; 45-minute sitting, 45-minute discussion.
Saskatoon Sundays throughout the year, 7:45 to 9:00 p.m.; Yoga Central, 211B – 3521 8th Street, Eastwood Centre; 30-minute discussion, 45-minute sitting.

ALL EVENTS are fragrance free – please avoid wearing perfumes, perfumed skin-care products, clothing washed in fragranced detergents, or anything else which can cause distress to those who are chemically sensitive.

Contacts for Regina Insight Meditation Community information: Maureen (306-352-1750) or Chris (306-522-0616).
Contact for Saskatoon events: Doris (306-242-5004).

THE CALGARY SCENE, 2002 AND 2003

- November 1 to 7** Residential Retreat with **Venerable Ajahn Sona**, at Kamp Kawanis in the Rockies near Calgary, \$399 retreat fee; contact Denny Poley, (403) 288-2883
- February 14 to 20** Loving Kindness Women's Residential Retreat with **Joanne Broatch**, at Kamp Kawanis in the Rockies near Calgary, fee to be announced; contact Judy Pequegnat-Jess, (403) 241-2219
- August 1 to 10** Residential Retreat with **Joseph Goldstein, Guy Armstrong** and **Myoshin Kelley**; retreat fee to be announced; information brochure available in January, 2003 (after January, contact Denny Poley, (403) 288-2883)

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Venerable Ajahn Sona trained as a Theravadin monk at Bhavana Society Forest Monastery, in West Virginia, USA, and later at monasteries in Thailand. He received ordination from Ven. Gunaratana Nayaka Thera, his preceptor. He established the Birken Forest Monastery, now near Kamloops, B.C., in 1991. He is an experienced meditation retreat leader and lectures on Buddhist meditation and practice in Canada and abroad. Ven. Sona's teachings combine tried-and-tested Buddhist wisdom with modern common sense.

- Sitting Groups:** *Calgary Vipassana Meditation and Study Group*, meets 2nd and 4th Sundays to sit and to study Buddhism; contact Barbara Ross, (403) 243-9697.
Calgary Theravadin Meditation Group, meets 1st and 3rd Wednesdays; contact Anne Mahoney (403) 270-8450
Canmore Vipassana Meditation and Study Group, meets every Tuesday; contact Mary Dumka (403) 678-2034

The Practice of *Dana*

In the spirit of the 2500 year-old tradition of the Buddha's teachings being priceless and freely offered to everyone who wishes to hear them, our programs are open to all, regardless of their ability to pay. Registration fees for retreats and classes cover administrative costs only.

Dana is the Pali term for "spontaneous generosity of the heart." Everyone wishing to express appreciation for hearing the teachings can voluntarily offer donations for the support of the teachers at retreats, public talks, sittings or any other occasion.

..... see also Laura Bourassa's article, "The Practice of Dana," pages 3 and 6

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..... continued from page 3

Thus the teachers ask us, “Have these teachings touched you, benefited you, helped you on your path? If so, then open your heart, deepen your practice and move forward on your path by honouring, as I do, the gift of the dharma with your generosity.” So the *dana* bowl is put out, providing us with an opportunity to deepen our practice through a simple act of generosity.

As the Buddha said, “If you knew, as I do, the power of giving, you would not let a single meal pass without sharing some of it.” In saying this, the Buddha encourages us to be open, in each moment, to the opportunities for the powerful practice of *dana*.

As I want to be happy, may you, too, be happy.

Metta.

Laura Bourassa

Finding Stability in a World of Chaos

The phone rings.

I pick up the receiver.

“Lyn’s breathing pattern has changed,” says a woman’s voice, “We think you should come back to the hospital as soon as you can.”

“Thank you,” I hear my voice reply, numbness racing through my body.

I find my two younger daughters, neither yet teenagers.

“We have been called back to the hospital,” I say. “I think Mum is dying.”

Sharing tears and fears unreservedly, we get into our car and are soon at Lyn’s bedside.

Six hours later, Lyn departs this life. Deep beneath the sadness of losing my beautiful, humourous, loving wife and partner with whom I have shared a path for sixteen years, I am aware of a sense of great relief for Lyn, who no longer has to struggle with pain and fear. She has released her need to be physically with me, with her three daughters, with the rest of her family, with her friends, with familiar surroundings.

In the emotional turmoil that follows for all our family, I witness in myself and others varying degrees of anger, denial, resentment, envy, bitterness, sadness, blame interspersed with moments of joy, compassion, kindness all underpinned by a strong network of love. Over time, the length differing for each of us, the strength of our more disruptive emotions fades, that of our more harmonious emotions increases. Some degree of balance is restored.

Now, for me, some twelve years later, many aspects of my life are similar to those that prevailed when Lyn was alive; other aspects are completely changed. For the most part, my heart is free and happy, singing to the sun, the snow, the sky, the smiling eyes, the care-worn faces, the thunder, the insects everything. It is, too, forever grateful to Lyn, who gave me so many precious gifts. One of these gifts that, over the years, has had immeasurable impact on me is – her death. Through dying, she brought home to me in the profoundest of ways, the reality and inevitability of death as an experience that will come to me sooner or later, and to the ill health that might precede the dying

process. This being the case, I must always be prepared for sickness and death, open my heart to them, lose my fear of them. I must do this not only with respect to my sickness and death, but also to the ill health and dying of others, some close and most dearly beloved, most playing more distant roles in my life. I say “must”, but in truth there is no imperative involved. The inner preparation, openness, and lack of fear just seem to happen. If Lyn can fall ill and die preserving her courage and grace, so, in the fullness of time, can I I hope! My special pathfinder, a divine messenger indeed, has shown me a way.

From this, other traumatic events in my life, and the dharma (the truth of things as they actually are), what do I (whatever “I” am) think that I have learned about stability in the chaos of the conditioned world of emotions, mind-drift, unpredictable decisions, natural and unnatural disasters, and no-control? The response that works best for me is: open-heartedly flow with ever-changing life. If I maintain speed with the natural flow of events of the world around me, many things in my neighbourhood keep their positions relative to each other, giving me a strong impression of stability. When relative positions change as they inevitably must, this sense of stability in the continuum of flow is little affected. As soon as I resist change, however, things that help bring wonder to my heart seem to be swiftly swept out of my vicinity and I find myself in strange and unfamiliar surroundings. Likewise, if I try to introduce or force change in an unnatural way, my surroundings are subject to unanticipated alterations. Responses other than going with the flow may work best for other people. Deep contemplation of our life experiences will likely help guide us along paths that most closely suit our temperaments. Such contemplation may, for example, lead to alignment of heart and mind, both of which then hold a common aspiration. If heart and mind are not aligned, opportunities abound for chaos and turmoil to hold sway in our lives.

So it is that I, no different from anyone else, a child of the universe, rest freely in life. In the core of my being, where no separate I exists and where unity gathers all creation and non-creation unto itself, all things, known and unknown, are fully interdependent, are truly empty, are completely stable.

Chris Gilboy

Exploring Engaged Spiritual Practice

How can we experience and express our interconnectedness in a sometimes very painful and challenging world?

A group of people from our community has begun to meet to explore our feelings and experience of global crisis. Issues that

we’ve begun to look at include environmental distress, war, violence, gender oppression, poverty and racism. Part of the intent of our inquiry is to help us become aware of ways in which we can actively engage in creating wise solutions and in finding our voice in order to speak our truth.

Our focus begins with looking inward at our own denial, pain, fear, joy and hope in relation to our shared world. We use ceremony, dance, emotionally evocative exercises, visualization and meditation as some of the strategies to explore our heart connection to the world. Our vision also includes creating an engaged spiritual practice as a natural expression of our growing awareness of our relationship with all beings. Experiencing our interconnection with all beings allows us to see clearly how greed, hatred and delusion lead to suffering not only in our own lives but throughout our world. Our intention is to open ourselves to love, compassion and wisdom, and enact this in our daily lives.

We meet every two weeks on Sunday afternoons at 4:00 p.m. The group process is facilitated by Pat Cavanaugh and Dana White and utilizes Joanna Macy's book "Coming Back to Life" as well as other resources. If you are interested in exploring engaged spirituality with us, you can call Dana at (306) 352-5691 or Pat at (306) 525-4048.

Pat Cavanaugh and Dana White

Remember This

Remember this

When you fear you can't recall
The sound of aspen leaves
Flapping noisily against each other
Like taut bits of canvas in the wind.

Remember this

When your nostrils long for Spring rain
But, instead, another late Winter snow
Makes monotone your longing for green.

Remember this

When you've forgotten your own heart's longing
Wrapped in the grey comforter of Winter.

Remember this

When your mind has had too much
Of walls, cold, coats, lined boots
And the darkness of late-night news.

Remember this

The utter, heart-breaking joy
Hearing the first meadow-lark's song
After so long a Winter.

In an instant the ice melts
The doors to your heart fly open
And you remember you've belonged here
All along.

A poem written during Myoshin Kelley's retreat in Moose Jaw, April 11-14 of this year.

Cherie Westmoreland

So We are Here

Two dreams precipitated the event. There is this small bird flying, winging its way through the air, being chased by a predator bird. I'm watching. I can see the small bird is somewhat injured. At the exact second that I think, "It is injured," the small bird falters and the predator takes it.

The second dream – I'm a mauve misty haze of nothingness, no reference point, nothing. As I realize I have no reference point, I panic. In that instant of panic, I am under a bridge, in water that is laden with several ships, boats and kayaks. There is so much water traffic that I cannot be at peace while I float.

And now – the grand meditation which is reminiscent of my two big dreams. As I sit focusing on my breath, I suddenly think, "How did I get here?" I'm free-floating – then, without notice, am sucked into a vortex of form. As if this isn't weird enough, I feel as if my whole entire existence in material form is a surprise. I'm wondering, "Where and when did I get caught? I've been living for fifty years and I am suddenly surprised at my very existence! What thought, what attachment, what else caused me to take on human form again?"

Later in the meditation, my two dreams seem relevant

I feel like the faltering bird or the floater in the mauve waves, suddenly subject to the creative power of a thought.

For days after, I feel oddly sorry for myself. I feel disappointed that I am here again, another unaware rebirth. But one day as I sit in the car sipping a coke, watching people passing by, it strikes me that we are all here. All of us. We all have this condition in common. We are here. No-one is above or below, better or worse, fatter or uglier or more beautiful. We are all here, every one of us caught by some grasping, some attachment or some fear that causes our human condition to manifest.

Understanding this basic point, I no longer feel sorry or disappointed at my so-called "falling from grace". I am in a sea of people who are the same as me. What a great leveller! What a cause for celebration!

Gail Tiefenbach

CDL Update

I attended my third CDL session at Spirit Rock Meditation Center in early July. It was a very inspiring and full six days of both reconnecting with the dharma leaders' community that we are forming and participating in the sessions. Each session touches on a different aspect which in some way contributes to my role in the Regina Insight Meditation Community. One of the themes we focused on was Women in Buddhism. It led to many important discussions and sharing around the growing role of women in the unfolding of Buddhism in the West. Ajaan Amaro led the session on the Thai Forest Tradition, sharing with us the history of this lineage, which is very much the root of the practice in which we are engaged here. Diversity continues to be a very important theme in our sessions, and I feel more and more that it is integral to our work as leaders in our communities. George Mumford, a dharma teacher who is a person of colour, joined our session for two days. His presence was deeply inspiring as he shared firstly his wisdom gained from taking the dharma into non-traditional settings like prisons, sport teams and adolescent groups, and secondly some of his experiences as a person of colour. I came away from this session in awe of our shared capacity to create a container in which we are able to speak our truth that does not overlook the issues of racism and division but in fact embraces these very difficult and painful areas. My experience is that it is our willingness to directly face these very challenging issues which is creating a community where there is a growing respect and mutual appreciation for each other.

I have been asked again to manage at the retreats which take place annually in January in Bodhgaya, India. I spent a long time in deciding whether to attend the fourth session of the CDL which is also in January, or to manage in Bodhgaya. In the end I decided to go to India, as this is also a very rich opportunity for my training as a community dharma leader. I will be organizing and managing in Bodhgaya from December 20 of this year through February 6, 2003. I plan then to go to Saranath, which is another Buddhist pilgrimage centre (where the Buddha gave his first discourse on the Four Noble Truths). I want to be there for a two-week open retreat which has a stronger emphasis on

sangha than silent retreats typically do. Each day, different groups examine various dharma themes stimulating inquiry and discussion. I'm delighted that I will have the opportunity to experience this program.

In closing, I want to express the deep appreciation I feel for the support this community gives me to attend the CDL program. I know that without your support, I would not be able to participate. I feel very privileged to be taking this training.

Dana White

Second Annual Community-Awareness Day

On June 8, about thirty people came together at Chris's house. We spent a very productive afternoon cleaning the meditation hall and common areas of the house. The place sparkled when we were done. Then we had a beautiful ceremony led by Dana and Pat blessing the meditation hall. This was followed by a potluck supper with some of the most delicious food I have ever eaten. After supper we were wonderfully entertained by the guitar and voice of Howard.....and Susan Wiebe exhibited her incredible photographs.

That evening we opened a silent auction and rummage table with items donated by community members. Many of the items in the auction were created by community members. The auction remained open until mid-July. Through it and sales at the rummage table, we raised about \$500 to put into the

Community Dharma Leader Program fund, so helping Dana to continue her participation in the CDL course.

The day provided a wonderful opportunity for the sangha to contribute to the ongoing operation of the RIMC and to honour the generosity of Chris and Jemma Gilboy in donating their home for our use. It also provided an opportunity to honour the creativity of our members and to support our dharma leader in her work.

On behalf of the community, I offer thanks to all those who participated in this special day. May the merit of that occasion be for the benefit and liberation of all beings, everywhere, without exception.

See you next spring.

Laura Bourassa

Regina Insight Meditation Community

c/o Apt E – 2334 College Avenue, Regina, SK S4P 1C7

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